

# HOW TO HELP YOUR OVERANXIOUS CHILD

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# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- All of us experience anxiety at some time
- Normal developmental pattern that is exhibited differently as children grow older
- Anxiety can arise from real or imagined circumstances
- One common definition is *apprehension or excessive fear about real or imagined circumstances*
- Triggers can be external and/or internal



# SIGNS OF ANXIETY

Cognitive	Behavioral	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Concentration difficulties</li><li>◆ Catastrophizing events</li><li>◆ Worrying</li><li>◆ Perfectionism</li><li>◆ Memory problems</li><li>◆ Overreactions</li><li>◆ Hyper vigilant</li><li>◆ Lack of confidence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Shyness</li><li>◆ Withdrawal</li><li>◆ Frequent questions</li><li>◆ Frequent need for reassurance</li><li>◆ Need for sameness</li><li>◆ Excessive talking</li><li>◆ Restlessness</li><li>◆ Habit behaviors (biting nails, twirling hair)</li><li>◆ Impulsiveness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Trembling/shaking</li><li>◆ Increased heart rate</li><li>◆ Shortness of breath</li><li>◆ Dizziness</li><li>◆ Flushing of skin</li><li>◆ Stomachaches or nausea</li><li>◆ Muscle tension</li><li>◆ Sleep problems</li></ul>

# 3 TIMES THAT CHILDREN WORRY

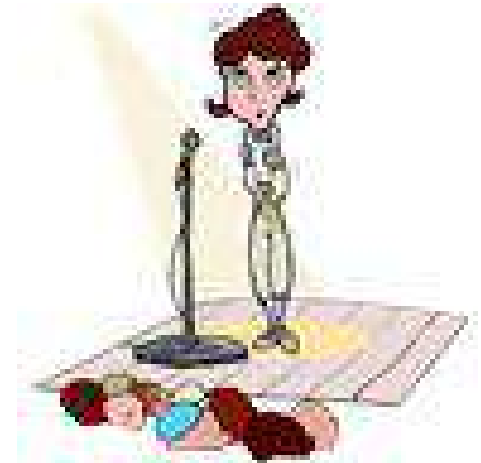
☐ Anticipation



☐ Experiencing the Feared Event



☐ Rumination



# HOW IS ANXIETY MAINTAINED?

□ Self-talk or “automatic thoughts”

□ Avoidant behavior



□ Inappropriate response to a fearful child



# HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?

- ☐ Maintain a consistent (but flexible) routine for homework, chores, and activities
- ☐ Help children express their feelings
- ☐ Don't deny your child's worries, ask "why", or reassure them excessively
- ☐ Answer questions honestly
- ☐ Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your child and yourself
- ☐ Accept mistakes as a normal part of growing up
- ☐ Distinguish between perfection and excellence
- ☐ Distinguish between "wants" and "shoulds"

# HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?

- ☐ Focus on the attention the child receives-praise their effort and their courage
- ☐ Remind your child of previous successes
- ☐ Be a good role model for your child (and talk out loud)
- ☐ Develop a reinforcement system if needed (with graded steps towards a goal)
- ☐ Encourage independent activities and self-reliance
- ☐ Compromise
- ☐ Schedule activities in moderation

# HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR CHILD?

- Help your child visualize-“Paint the Picture”
- Plan for transitions
- Teach your child strategies to help them handle anxiety:
  - ▣ Develop scripts of what to do or say in feared situations and teach calming self-talk (change their “automatic thoughts”)
  - ▣ Teach your child how to relax
  - ▣ Help them problem-solve
  - ▣ Help them plan instead of worry (i.e. practice for a specific event to build confidence)
  - ▣ Organize their materials and time to reduce stress
  - ▣ Provide alternate activities to distract your child from worries
- Allow “worry time”, have a “worry doll” or a “worry box”
- Use “coping cards”



# HELP AT SCHOOL

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- ☐ Prepare for transitions (substitutes, fire drills, field trips)
- ☐ Class participation
- ☐ Assignment modifications
- ☐ Extended time for tests
- ☐ “Cool down” pass or safe place
- ☐ Preferential seating

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

- What To Do When You Worry Too Much (A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety) (*Huebner, D.* 2006)
- The Worried Child: Recognizing Anxiety in Children and Helping Them Heal (*Foxman, P.* 2004)
- Your Anxious Child: How Parents and Teachers Can Relieve Anxiety in Children (*Dacey, J.S. & Fiore, B.* 2001)
- Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child (*Manassis, K.* 1996)
- Freeing Your Child From Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias (*Chansky, T.* 2004)
- Wemberly Worried (*Henkes* 2000)
- When My Worries Get Too Big! A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety (*Buron, K.* 2006)
  
- [www.aada.org](http://www.aada.org) (Anxiety Disorders Associate of America)
- [www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net) (The Child Anxiety Network)
- [www.childhoodanxietynetwork.org](http://www.childhoodanxietynetwork.org)
- [www.schoolbehavior.com](http://www.schoolbehavior.com)
- [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)
- [www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)

